



How business
owners can
really embrace
AI in **2026**



Practical guidance.
Real examples.
Clear actions to get
started.

Adopting AI isn't about buying the latest shiny tool. It's about reshaping processes, freeing up your team's time, and building a smarter, more resilient organisation.

Here at Ingenio Technologies, we've seen first-hand how AI transforms the way businesses operate – and the most successful ones have taken simple, strategic steps to embed AI into everyday workflows.

In this guide, we break down where business leaders should focus, with real examples from the sectors we support across the South East.

1. AUTOMATE THE REPETITIVE TASKS

Every business has jobs that get in the way of higher-value work. Admin, data entry, manual reporting... AI can take on these tasks instantly.

Example: Accounting firm in Sussex

A mid-sized accountancy practice automated client onboarding, Anti Money Laundering (AML) checks and data extraction from bank statements using AI-enabled workflow tools.

Impact:

- Freed up 12 hours per week for the operations manager
- Reduced onboarding turnaround time from 3 days to under 24 hours
- Improved accuracy, removing manual data-entry errors entirely

Where you can apply this:

- Sales admin (scheduling, email drafting, notes)
- Finance (invoice processing, reconciliation, forecasting)
- Operations (stock reports, supplier documents)
- HR (holiday approvals, policy responses)

Tip: Start by listing the tasks your team regularly say, “I wish this part was quicker.” Those are prime candidates for automation.

Nearly 35% of UK SMEs are actively using AI.

Over a third of small and medium-sized enterprises in the UK report actively using AI technology in their business operations, up from 25% in 2024 — showing clear momentum among businesses starting to adopt AI tools.

Source: British Chamber of Commerce



2. IMPROVE DECISION-MAKING WITH AI-DRIVEN INSIGHTS

AI can turn raw data into accurate, easy-to-read insights that drive smarter decisions.

Example: Charity in Brighton

The organisation struggled with unclear funding forecasts. By using AI forecasting tools integrated within their existing reporting system, they created clearer 12-month projections.

Impact:

- Sharper visibility for trustees
- Faster, evidence-based budgeting
- Reduced reliance on spreadsheets that regularly caused errors

Where you can apply this:

- Sales forecasting
- Staff utilisation planning
- Cashflow modelling
- Predictive maintenance for equipment
- Customer satisfaction analysis

Tip: Start small. Pick one business question you struggle to answer reliably, then explore AI tools that can support that decision.



3. USE AI AS A VIRTUAL ASSISTANT FOR YOUR TEAM

AI assistants are becoming standard across productivity suites. They can summarise meetings, write content, create presentations, analyse data – all in seconds.

Example: Legal practice in Surrey

Solicitors began using AI meeting tools to draft case summaries, create research packs and produce follow-up notes.

Impact:

- Time spent on admin reduced by 40%
- Greater accuracy in documentation
- More time for billable work

Where you can apply this:

- Meeting summaries and next steps
- Drafting complex documents
- Preparing sales proposals
- Writing website or marketing content
- Responding to customer enquiries quickly

Tip: Give every team member guidance on what AI can do for their role. Adoption improves dramatically when staff know the benefits.



4. STRENGTHEN CUSTOMER SERVICE WITHOUT INCREASING HEADCOUNT

AI can help deliver faster, more consistent customer service – especially valuable for growing SMEs.

Example: Insurance broker in West Sussex

The business introduced an AI assistant connected to their CRM to answer client queries instantly and prepare policy renewal summaries.

Impact:

- Clients received answers 4x faster
- Support tickets dropped by 30%
- Staff spent more time building relationships instead of chasing documents

Where you can apply this:

- First-response FAQs
- Drafting personalised email replies
- Updating customer records
- Proactively flagging churn risk

Tip: AI shouldn't replace your personal touch – it should give your team more time to deliver it.



5. EMBRACE AI IN YOUR IT STRATEGY

AI only works well when your IT systems are ready for it. Outdated infrastructure, inconsistent security and legacy systems can quickly lead to risk.

What business owners should do next:

- Review your cloud setup to ensure it supports AI workloads
- Strengthen identity and access management
- Align AI use with compliance and governance requirements
- Provide staff with AI training to avoid “shadow tech”
- Work with your IT Service Provider to ensure AI tools integrate safely and securely

Here at Ingenio Technologies, we help businesses adopt AI carefully and confidently, ensuring their systems, data and people are protected every step of the way.

The businesses that win in 2026 will be the ones that start now

The biggest mistake SMEs make is waiting until they “feel ready.” AI won’t slow down – and neither will your competitors.



Ready to embrace AI?

AI is an opportunity – but only if it's adopted safely, strategically and with your people in mind.

If you'd like tailored advice on where AI will make the biggest impact in your organisation, speak with our team today.

We'll help you build a clear, practical AI strategy that fits your systems, your people and your long-term vision.

CONTACT US TODAY.



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